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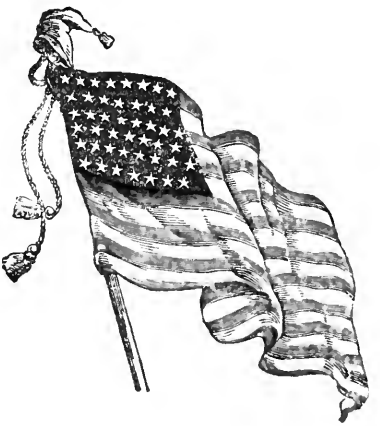
A SERMON PREACHED ON BOARD U. S. BATTLE-SHIP "IOWA" IN GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA, JULY 10, 1898, THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE NAVAL BATTLE OF SANTIAGO



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CREW
OF THE BATTLE-SHIP "IOWA"

A SERMON

PREACHED ON BOARD U. S. BATTLE-SHIP "IOWA,"
IN GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA, JULY 10, 1898,
THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE NAVAL
BATTLE OF SANTIAGO

BY

ROSWELL RANDALL HOES

CHAPLAIN, U. S. N.

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God's Hand at Santiago.

Sermon Preached by Chaplain Roswell Randall Hoes, U. S. N., on Board the U. S. Battle-ship "IOWA," in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, July 10, 1898, the Sunday following the Naval Battle of Santiago.

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"*Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory.*"— Psalm 98 : 1.

THE second article for the "Government of the United States Navy" is as follows: "The commanders of vessels and naval stations to which Chaplains are attached shall cause divine service to be performed on Sunday, whenever the weather and other circumstances allow it to be done; and it is earnestly recommended to all officers, seamen, and others in the naval service diligently to attend at every performance of the worship of Almighty God."

Last Sunday, the 3d of July, no divine service was held on this battle-ship. The weather was favorable, but "other circumstances" forbade. Our usual hour for worshiping God found us engaged in one of the most remarkable and effective naval engagements recorded in the annals of our country. The voice of prayer and the singing of praise gave place to the roar of our deadly guns and the various other activities attending a bloody conflict. However long we may live, we shall never forget the events of that day! The sudden call to general quarters; the cries passing with lightning rapidity from mouth to mouth that the Spanish ships were leaving the harbor; the orderly rallying of officers and men at their respective stations; the rattle of the chains hoisting our ammunition; the roar of our guns from the turrets and secondary batteries; the whistling of the enemy's shot flying over our decks; the crashing of our shells through and upon the ships of our foe; the sinking of the Spanish torpedo-boats, the beaching and burning of their war vessels; the lowering of their flags in token of surrender; the rescue by our men of the *Vizcaya's* offi-

cers and crew; their arrival on this ship, many of them naked and the blood streaming from their ghastly wounds and gory stumps; the surrender of his sword by Captain Eulate of the *Vizcaya* to Captain Evans and his declining to receive it — all these and many other thrilling incidents have stamped a picture upon our minds which memory will ever retain.

But, comrades, there is something else which, as officers and men in the naval service of a Christian land, we should never forget, and that is that it was the "right hand" and the "holy arm" of Almighty God that gave us this marvellous victory. The whole history of the world, with all of its vicissitudes, whether in war or in peace, is but the unfolding of God's plans for the government of the universe. Events do not come to pass through blind chance or accident. There is an intelligent purpose that marks all the events of history, and guides the destinies of the human race. "Man proposes, but God disposes," and "He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand." It

may not always be possible for us to comprehend why certain events or circles of events transpire, but if we believe in the existence of God, as all sane men must, it is not difficult to understand that Divine intelligence and will underly Divine government. And so it is that the years and decades and centuries roll on, giving continuous expression to God's designs for the welfare of the human race. And while all this is true, it is also true that in the accomplishment of His wise purposes, God employs human instrumentalities. We are often but the means used for the accomplishment of Divine ends. The Almighty can work *without* us, but in the exercise of His superior wisdom He frequently prefers to work *through* us. And this applies not only to individuals: it is equally true of the nations of the earth, which, through His directive power, accomplish His sovereign will. They may be guided by Him to reward the right and punish the wrong — to carry to others the blessings of peace, or to wield against them the engines of war.

In the light of these facts, it is not difficult to trace God's hand in the war in which

we are now engaged. We may not understand all of His purposes in allowing such a conflict as this to be waged between Christian nations in these closing years of the nineteenth century, but it would seem that He has permitted us to recognize *some* of those purposes. For one, I firmly believe that God intended the great Republic of the West to be His instrument to punish the Spanish nation for the crimes committed in her name on the soil of the Western world. Spain once practically owned and controlled most of this continent and its adjacent islands. Through governmental mismanagement and official oppression and cruelty, extending through more than four centuries, she has steadily been losing her grasp. For prudential and other reasons she yielded Florida and her vast possessions west of the Mississippi River, and through the revolt of her subjects she lost her sovereignty in South America and Mexico. Nothing now remains to her in this part of the world but the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico, and it is my belief that the fiat of the American people will be obeyed that the Spanish flag shall no longer be permitted to

wave over a single foot of American soil. This is no war of aggression nor for the acquisition of territory. It is a conflict conceived and prosecuted in behalf of suffering humanity, and a just and self-respecting rebuke to a nation whose hostile attitude made possible the treacherous destruction of the *Maine*. The American people declined to tolerate another Armenia within less than a hundred miles of our own shores. Human butchery, enforced starvation, and, in many instances, agonizing physical torture — these are things against which every instinct of humanity in our country cried aloud in violent protest. Our countrymen could not be true to themselves by turning a deaf ear to cries that reached us from the very portals of the grave. Our honored Chief Magistrate employed all the available means that diplomacy offered to accomplish the will of our people through peaceful channels. No President was ever more faithful to his trust than was ours during those trying days. No statesman ever struggled for honorable peace more valiantly than he. He realized the awful responsibilities and terrible sufferings which would attend an

appeal to arms, and, without shrinking or hesitation, he adopted every means consistent with our national honor to avert it. Our demands upon Spain were, as we believe, just in the sight of God, and such as commended themselves to the moral sentiment of all unprejudiced minds of whatever name or nationality. But Spain would not yield, and we *could* not. There was nothing left to do, and we were plunged into the stern realities of war. The Navy was ready for the conflict. Our guns were prepared to bellow, and our gunners were impatient for the fray. Dewey soon sent us his compliments from Manila, and now Sampson has responded.

With all reverence we conscientiously believe that the voice of our guns was the voice of God, and that the awful message uttered was in condemnation of Spanish oppression and cruelty, and a punishment for crimes that have left many indelible stains on the pages of history. Comrades, the Lord of Hosts hath done it! He directed the counsels of our well-loved Admiral, He spoke through the commands of our gallant Captain from the conning-tower, and He

guided the hands that manned our guns. "The Lord hath appeared for us: the Lord hath covered our heads, and made us to stand in the day of battle. The Lord hath appeared for us; the Lord hath overthrown our enemies, and dashed in pieces those that rose up against us. Therefore not unto us, O Lord, not unto us: but unto thy Name be given the glory." "Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory."

But, comrades, amid our rejoicings for victory and our ascriptions of praise to Almighty God for giving it to us, we should not fail to render Him our profound gratitude for the preservation of our lives and our escape from all physical injury. The Spanish ships, we were told by our prisoners, were ordered to concentrate their fire upon the *Iowa*, and the escape of every one of our officers and men from either death or injury seems, to human eyes, nothing less than miraculous. It has been estimated that the enemy's loss in killed and wounded could not have been less than six

hundred, while in our whole squadron poor Ellis of the *Brooklyn* was the only man killed, and only two were wounded. This disparity of loss stands unique in the naval battles of the world. Even when we take into full account, on the one hand, the terrible rapidity of our fire and our unerring marksmanship, which early in the action drove the Spaniards from their guns, and the evident lack of discipline and efficiency on the Spanish ships and their wretched marksmanship on the other, we are still unable to explain, from any human point of view, the fact that not a single man on our ship was either killed or wounded. It certainly was not because we were unhit, for the enemy's shell struck us nine times, and their fragments flew in every direction. Nor was it because of our distance from the enemy, for the *Iowa* approached within very short range of the Spanish ships. We can, therefore, only believe that, in spite of our sins and unworthiness, the protecting arm of the Almighty was stretched forth to shield us from harm.

If this be not reason for gratitude, then I ask, my comrades, where can we find one?

It is easy enough, in our carelessness and indifference, to forget these things — easy to attribute our deliverance to human causes — easy to magnify the power of earthly counsels; but the fact still remains as the statement of Scripture and confirmed by the voice of history, that "in Him we live and move and have our being," and that "our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth." If we would be consistent Christians and worthy men — loyal to our God and true to the better instincts of our nature, we cannot fail to recognize these truths and to act upon them. Gratitude to God is but the least of virtues — nay, it is no virtue at all. It is only the proper recognition of Divine blessings, and is therefore merely the rendering of a simple act of justice to the Almighty. He who is lacking in gratitude is destitute of one of the most essential elements of true manhood, and has no claim whatever upon the favor of God.

Let not this, comrades, be our attitude towards Him who holds us in the hollow of His hands, but let us praise Him for His goodness and mercies through all our lives,

and especially during the memorable Battle of Santiago. Let us seek his face and favor, and render Him a humble tribute of thanksgiving. To do this as a mere matter of form is nothing less than mockery. Only sincerity is acceptable to Him. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." The best evidence we can give Him of our gratitude is, first, by confessing our sins, and then by forsaking them. It is by doing the things that He desires and leaving undone those that He hates. It is by bringing ourselves, by His help, each day of our lives, nearer the standard of true Christian manhood, or, in the words of Paul, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

There is one incident attending the historic events of last Sunday which I cannot forbear mentioning. I refer to the generous and magnanimous treatment which was extended by both the officers and crew of this ship to our Spanish prisoners from the hour they stepped upon our decks until they

left us on the afternoon of the following day. A large portion of them, as you know, were rescued from drowning by the boats sent from this ship, and you are well aware of the condition in which they reached us. Many of them were entirely naked, many others wore but a single garment, and but very few were completely dressed. Nor can any of us ever forget the ghastly manner in which a considerable number of them were wounded. Their bloody stumps and shattered limbs presented a spectacle such as probably none of us, save our Commanding Officer, had ever witnessed. You lifted them as gently as though they were your brothers instead of your enemies, and carried them to the sick-bay. There they received the most careful and skillful surgical attention at the hands of our doctors and were watched over and waited upon as tenderly as though they were attached to our own ship. The men composing the Spanish crews were so completely clothed from our new Government stores that when they left us they were actually better clad than our own men. You gave them your pipes and tobacco, and performed for them so

many other generous acts that their confidence of safety was restored, and they were convinced that their expectations of immediate execution were not to be realized. In like manner, their commissioned officers were treated with the consideration which we would extend to our personal guests. Admiral Cervera and his flag-lieutenant (who was his son), as well as Captain Eulate of the *Vizcaya*, were not only entertained by Captain Evans in his cabin, but they were even partially clad in his garments! We, too, of the Ward-Room did all in our power for the other officers, and treated them in every instance as though they were our intimate friends instead of our enemies and prisoners. We clothed those whose necessities required it in our own garments, we vacated our rooms in order that they might sleep in our beds, and we did everything else we could to contribute to their personal comfort. Now we are simply talking among ourselves here this morning, and not to the outer world, and in the spirit of truth instead of boastfulness, and I think I am justified in stating that no prisoners in the annals of military or naval history were

ever before treated as we treated ours. You fought with magnificent desperation; you inflicted upon the enemy every possible injury that our engines of war could execute; but from the very moment that the Spanish ships hauled down their flags, every thing that human kindness and skill could devise for the saving of life, for the relief of suffering and for the personal comfort and welfare of our foes was done, and gladly and cheerfully done, by the officers and men of this ship. Their very helplessness appealed to you, and the events of the day proved that your magnanimity and generosity were only equalled by your courage and heroism.

And now permit me to say, in conclusion, that we have every reason to congratulate ourselves to-day that we are officers and men in the United States Navy. A pardonable pride seizes us as we read the words addressed to Admiral Sampson by the Chief Magistrate of our country. "You have," he says, "the gratitude and congratulations of the whole American people. Convey to the noble officers and crews through whose valor new honors have been

added to the American Navy the grateful thanks and appreciation of the Nation." And the head of our Department at Washington, also addressing our Admiral, says: "The Secretary of the Navy sends you and every officer and man of your fleet, remembering equally your dead comrade, grateful acknowledgment of your heroism and skill. All honor to the brave! You have maintained the glory of the American Navy."

Now, if we deserve words like these, a great responsibility is placed upon us. If much has been given us, much will also be required. The victory at Santiago calls every officer and man of this ship to the better performance of every duty that may be placed upon us. It also invites us to the exercise of a still higher patriotism and the continued devotion of ourselves to the service of our beloved country. Thanks to your valor, we stand to-day in the face of other lands as we never stood before. This war may possibly lead to complications of which we now but little dream. But whatever may come to pass, we may be sure that our voice among the nations will be respected as it never has been before. Our

country, with the help of God, will never falter in defense of the right. In the ebb and flow of public sentiment, truth will eventually prevail; and it is our privilege, comrades, to stand as a rock of defense for our beloved land, and to dedicate ourselves anew to the service of our God and our country.

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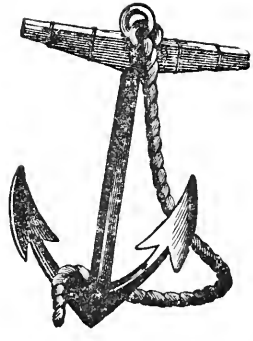
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